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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000481

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN THE KASAI: STABLE, FOR NOW

REF: A. KINSHASA 380

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 405

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During a February 21-24 visit to Western and Eastern Kasai provinces, PolOff met with a variety of local political actors (reftels) and with the commanders of the DRC's 4th and 5th Military Regions. Neither province has been subject to violence and militia activity as have the DRC's eastern provinces. Nonetheless, the potential for civil unrest remains a concern. Military, MONUC and civilian officials foresaw no significant security threats from soldiers of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) during the upcoming national elections. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Unlike their counterparts to the east, neither Western nor Eastern Kasai face major internal or external security threats. Consequently, the DRC's 4th and 5th Military Regions are relatively calm, and the FARDC enjoys solid relations with their MONUC counterparts and the local population.

[1](#)3. (C) FARDC troops have, however, engaged in sporadic acts of extortion or harassment. Monsignor Joachim Kadima of the Catholic Diocese in Kananga (Western Kasai) told PolOff that FARDC soldiers often set up roadblocks in the region and demand payment from merchants and other travelers. There have also been occasional reports of theft and sexual violence.

WESTERN KASAI

[1](#)4. (C) Col. Charly Tshuma, deputy commander of the 4th Military Region, said relations with his MONUC counterparts have been quite good and the two groups often exchange information and work together. For example, Tshuma cited the joint patrols FARDC and MONUC police conduct in Kananga on a daily and weekly basis. Tshuma said the biggest problem facing FARDC troops now is the need to improve soldiers' pay and to demobilize inactive soldiers.

[1](#)5. (C) One potential flashpoint, Tshuma said, would be the reception of several thousand troops from the 5th Integrated Brigade, who were being transferred from Rutshuru after fleeing from battle. Tshuma said over 440 soldiers had arrived as of February 21, but no disciplinary problems had surfaced. He added that CONADER (the Congolese agency charged with carrying out the process of demobilization, reintegration and reinsertion) had recently opened a new office in Kananga and would be dealing with some of the soldiers from the 5th Integrated Brigade. Tshuma said he had heard bizarre rumors among the local population (which PolOff

heard from other officials in Kananga) that the soldiers from the 5th were Mai-Mai troops being sent to the Kasais to "control" the local population, or even perhaps to spread AIDS.

¶6. (C) Despite his assurances of confidence and calm, however, Tshuma sought a private meeting with PolOff February 22 to discuss issues he "could not talk about in front of others." Tshuma said he, as well as some others in the command, feared that if current President Joseph Kabila were elected, Kabila would take the opportunity to "settle accounts" in the military. Tshuma said he also feared that whoever gets elected would attempt to manipulate the military against political opponents. PolOff said the best course for the FARDC was to remain politically neutral and focus on becoming an effective, professional military force.

EASTERN KASAI

¶7. (C) Gen. Obed Rwabasira, commander of the 5th Military Region, agreed that the pay and training of soldiers were priorities. Rwabasira said there were some discipline problems among the forces under his command, but most wanted to receive further professional training. Rwabasira estimated that the majority of troops who will be going through the orientation and integration centers will choose to remain in the military.

¶8. (C) When asked if he had concerns about political involvement by the military in Eastern Kasai, Gen. Rwabasira said he did not. Rwabasira said his troops were "loyal to the country," and would remain "apolitical" during elections. He

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added that the FARDC in Eastern Kasai were prepared to provide all necessary measures to ensure election security, and that acts of violence would not be tolerated. In fact, Rwabasira was confident the situation would remain calm in the province throughout the electoral process.

KIVUS CONNECTIONS

¶9. (C) Some of the FARDC leadership in the Kasais has been closely linked to prior incidents of violence in eastern DRC. Gen. Rwabasira was formerly the regional military commander in North Kivu province, during the period when dissident Gen. Laurent Nkunda recruited FARDC troops and then marched on Bukavu in South Kivu in 2004. Rwabasira was reportedly complicit in aiding Nkunda and the rebel FARDC soldiers during the attack, although no evidence has been presented to confirm any involvement on his part. Following the takeover of Bukavu, Rwabasira was reassigned to Mbuji-Mayi. According to FARDC and GDRC sources, Rwabasira's activities are closely monitored and it is not believed he poses any security threat in Eastern Kasai.

¶10. (C) Western Kasai also hosted its own exile from the Kivus in the form of Gen. Masunzu, a well-known Munyamulenge leader who commanded a Banyamulenge brigade in South Kivu during much of the 1998 - 2003 war. Masunzu was sent to Kananga to serve as the region's deputy military commander. Masunzu was ostensibly reassigned there to go through the brassage process and serve as an example to the troops under his command (most of whom never did enter brassage). Masunzu, however, was deeply unhappy with his assignment, and soon afterwards returned to his home base of Minembwe, South Kivu. Government officials maintain Masunzu is "on vacation," but it is now Col. Tshuma, and not Masunzu, who is the current deputy military commander in Kananga. Sources with the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) have told PolCouns that Masunzu is currently in Minembwe with those troops still loyal to him -- who have not been through the brassage process and he is

very much at the center of current tensions in South Kivu's High Plateau region.

COMMENT: LITTLE REASON TO WORRY

¶11. (C) Compared to eastern provinces in the DRC, the Kasais are relatively calm with regard to the conduct and operations of the FARDC. Military commanders in both regions claim their troops pose no security threats and will maintain their neutrality during the electoral process. The high levels of cooperation thus far between the FARDC and MONUC is also encouraging. End comment.
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